DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 657 PS 016 671

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TITLE Father Unemployment and the Young Child.
SPONS AGENCY Michigan Univ., Ann Arbor. School of Social Work.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 36p.; A shorter version of this paper was presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Baltimore, MD, April 23-26, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Development; *Child Rearing; *Cognitive Ability; Comparative Analysis; Competence; *Employed Parents; *Fathers; Parent Child Relationship; Self Concept; *Unemployment; *Young Children

ABSTRACT

To examine the effects of paternal unemployment on young children, a study was conducted using a sample of 28 primarily white, working-class, intact families with a child aged 3 to 6. Half of the children were boys and half were girls; 16 fathers were working and 12 were jobless. Among the child variables assessed were verbal intelligence, children's perceptions of their own competence, and attendance at school. It was hypothesized that if the quantity and quality of paternal involvement in child rearing were greater with unemployed fathers, their children would be more competent. One major difference emerged between the two subgroups of children: children's perceptions of their own cognitive competence were lower in children of jobless men. The general similarity in competence between the children of working and jobless men meshed with other findings indicating that unemployed men were more involved in child care than working peers but were not more nurturant and did not provide more stimulating activities and resources for the children. A six-page reference list is included. (Author)

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# Father Unemployment and the Young Child

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Running Head: FATHER UNEMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

To examine the effects of paternal unemployment on young children, a study was conducted using a sample of 28 primarily white, working-class intact families with a child aged 3 to 6, 1/2 boys and 1/2 girls. Sixteen fathers were working and 12 were jobless. Among the child variables assessed were verbal intelligence, perceptions of their own competence, and attendance at school. It was hypothesized that if the quantity and quality of paternal involvement in childrearing were greater with unemployed fathers, their children would be more competent. One major difference emerged between the two subgroups of children: perceptions of their own cognitive competence was lower in children of jobless men. The general similarity in competence between the children of working and jobless men meshed with other findings indicating that unemployed men were more involved in childcare than working peers but were not more nurturant and did not provide more stimulating activities and resources for the children.

In the total group, the children's perception of their own cognitive competence was found to be lower in families where fathers were unemployed than in families where they were working. No other differences in child measures emerged in comparisons of the two subgroups. When only boys were considered, there were two differences; the boys' perception of their cognitive competence was lower and the percentage of days they were absent from school was higher when fathers were jobless than when fathers were employed. In addition, sons of unemployed men had a better understanding of unemployment than peers with working fathers. For girls, there were no linkages between child measures and father employment status. The general lack of difference on competence variables between the two subgroups of children meshed with other findings in the study indicating that jobless men were more involved in childcare than their working peers, but they did not provide more cognitively stimulating activities for the children, activities which were found to correlate with PPVT scores in the total sample and in families with sons. There were also indications from the data that the jobless fathers engaged in more physical activities with their children than working men. In the light of the above and the fact that there was no evidence of a spillover effect, strategies for helping jobless working-class men learn to foster the intellectual development of their young children are discussed.

Unemployment is a painful condition. It not only assaults the victims directly involved, but members of victims' families as well (Buss & Redburn, 1983; Moen, 1983; Elder, 1979; Margolis, 1982; Moen, 1979). Those facts were documented over 50 years ago during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Despite this apparent wealth of knowledge, very little is known about what occurs to young children in the 1980's when their fathers lose their jobs. It has been noted by researchers studying unemployment that there are many gaps in the literature regarding the effects of joblessness, and one such void is the effect of paternal joblessness on children's education and later careers (Buss & Redburn, 1983). Without a solid foundation of such knowledge, interventions attempting to prevent dyfunctional behavior in the children of unemployed men, or to keep initial difficulties from expanding into major long-term problems are likely to be ineffective, inefficient, and perhaps even inappropriate.

The issue is critical for it has been estimated that in 1979 when the annual unemployment rate was over 7%, more than 10 million children under 18 years of age experienced unemployment of a parent, or 15% of the children in that age bracket (Margolis, 1982). The percentage of children 3 to 6 years of age undergoing that experience is undoubtedly larger than its proportionate share of the under-18 group since it has been found that young families with preschool children were the most likely to have an unemployed breadwinner (Moen, Kain, & Elder, 1983). This is particularly true in blue-collar families as semi-skilled and unskilled workers with low seniority are the most vulnerable to job loss.

Numerous theories have been put forth suggesting the nature of the linkages between the work role, the parent role, and the child's development.

For example, in one model (Moen et al., 1983) it was proposed that social and economic change at the societal level (e.g., a recession) brings about situational changes in the family (e.g., paternal unemployment) that combine with the resources of the family (e.g., mother's income) to influence the child's development through at least four paths, two of which are relevant to this study: 1) the amount of paternal nurturance and punitiveness; 2) the kind of role models the parents provide. According to the model, there are also several mediators between the situational changes and those four paths. Clearly the issue is complex, and many factors determine the outcomes for young children when their fathers are out of work. In the investigation to be described, a few potential mediators were explored with the full awareness that many others might have been considered.

As to the research literature concerning unemployment effects on young children's cognitive and social functioning, only two outcomes have been fairly well established. The consequence with the most solid support is that the likelihood of child abuse is increased. In general, it was found that the risk increases at about the same amount as the level of unemployment (Margolis, 1982). However, Margolis stated that there is a low probability of abuse in general, so that the increase in abuse actually affects relatively few children with jobless fathers.

The second established outcome for young children of paternal unemployment is well documented but those documents are over 40 years old. A classic study conducted by Elder (1974, 1979; Elder & Rockwell, 1979) focused on the effects of the Great Depression on children and a portion of that research pertained to children who were three to five years old during the early phase of the Depression. The sample consisted primarily of middle-class children who lived in Berkeley, California, and were participants in a study

created for other reasons. Elder reviewed the extensive longitudinal files of that study and concluded that male children in the preschool-age group in families described as deprived were negatively affected by the Depression. However, the negative impact was not demonstrated until the boys entered secondary school when they exhibited poorer school performance and a tendency to withdraw from adversity and employ self-defeating tactics (Elder, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The deprived boys' greater impairment appeared to stem from the greater conflict between father and sons in these families and more erratic and punitive discipline from their fathers (Elder, 1979). One of the most important mediators appeared to be the personality characteristics of the fathers and children. The presence of an irritable father or irritable child significantly increased the likelihood that unemployment would have long-range negative consequences for the boy's life course development (Bronfenbrenner, 1983).

More recent information collected about the impact of unemployment on young children's social development emerged in a dissertation conducted in three small working class cities near Detroit (Friedmann, 1984). There was a very low response rate but one finding very relevant to this paper arose; there were no significant differences in peer relations between the children whose fathers were unemployed and the children of working fathers even when the unemployment had been experienced for a long period of time. In addition, the initial results of a study on the consequences for children aged 1 1/2 to 13 years of paternal unemployment found minimal effects (Margolis & Farran, 1985, April).

## Potential Mediators

Two possible mediators of paternal unemployment effects are the quantity and quality of the father's involvement with his child. The Moen et al.

(1983) model of mediators between societal problems and child functioning included the latter factor but not the former. The recent literature on employed men in intact families who voluntarily became principal caregivers suggests that high father involvement with preschool children has beneficial effects on both sons and daughters (Radin & Sagi, 1981; Radin, 1978; 1981a; 1982; Radin & Russell, 1983; Carlson, 1980; Sagi, 1982). It was found that children of primary caregiving fathers compared to peers in traditional homes in two-parent, middle-class families have a more internal locus of control which is associated with academic competence, especially in a white population (Bridge, Moock, & Judd, 1979; Coleman et al., 1966). Their verbal ability appears to be fostered and there is evidence of greater empathy among these youngsters.

Further, there are indications that fathers who are major caregivers of young children spend more time than traditional fathers in cognitively stimulating activities with their preschoolers (Radin, 1982; Radin & Sagi, 1981). This may have positive long-term consequences for the children's intellectual growth (Bradley, Caldwell, & Elardo, 1979; van Doorninck, Caldwell, Wright, & Frankenberg, 1981; Elardo, Bradley, & Caldwell, 1975; Radin, 1972; Wittes & Radin, 1971; Clark, 1983; Parks & Smeriglio, 1986, Amato & Ochiltree, 1986). There is also considerable evidence that the amount of father interaction with sons in traditional families is positively correlated with the boys' cognitive development, especially when the father is nurturant; in contrast, restrictiveness in fathers is negatively associated with cognitive growth in young boys, particularly in lower-class families (Radin, 1981b; Radin & Epstein, 1975; Epstein & Radin, 1975; Radin, 1972). It is thus possible that warm unemployed fathers who choose to spend time with their

preschoolers, especially young boys, may foster their children's social and cognitive growth.

But it is questionable if jobless fathers will exhibit these behaviors. Theory suggests that two types of relationships may exist between the work and family roles: there may be a compensatory relationship, or a spillover effect (Kanter, 1977; Rousseau, 1978). In the compensatory orientation, the individual seeks solace and gratification in family relationships when the occupational role is aversive or painful. This may account for the improved father-child relations found in a small percentage of families during the Great Depression (Bakke, 1940; Kamorovsky, 1940) and in the recession of the 1970's (Thomas, McCabe, & Berry, 1980). The spillover orientation exists when the attitudes, particularly negative attitudes, generated in the job sphere overflow into attitudes toward family members. For example, burnout in welfare workers was found to be associated with less marital satisfaction (Jayaratne, Chess, & Kunkle, 1986). The prior discussion of paternal influence on children suggests that the child's development may be enhanced if the jobless father takes a compensatory approach but it may be hindered if a spillover orientation emerges.

Maternal employment outside the home when the father is jobless is another potential mediator and it too can have negative or positive effects on father interactions with young children. Despite the recession, there were 2 1/2 million employed women with children aged four to six years of age in two-parent families in the early 1980's (Children's Defense Fund, 1982). It is not known how many of these mothers had unemployed husbands but it has been found that a family often copes with paternal unemployment by the wife's finding a job (Thomas et al., 1980; Fried, 1979; Bakke, 1940). A wife's employed status may have negative consequences for the relationship between an

unemployed father and his children because it was observed that the father's status typically drops when his wife goes to work (Thomas et al., 1980), and tensions mount, particularly if the man holds relatively rigid stereotypes about sex roles (Powell & Driscoll, 1973; Furstenberg, 1974). One strategy the working-class husband uses to cope with his loss of status as the major breadwinner in the family is to reduce his involvement with family affairs (Aldous, 1969). This could extend to his involvement with his children and can interfere with his relationship with his preschoolers. But it is also likely that the additional income derived from the wife's job relieves some of the financial stress on the family and hence diminishes some of the tension among family members.

The goal of the project to be discussed was to determine the effect of paternal unemployment on young children in two-parent, primarily blue collar families, specifically, to determine some of the consequences for the children's social and cognitive competence. We also wished to explore some possible mediators of those relationships. In this paper the discussion will be confined to just a few of the mediators investigated: the quantity of father involvement with the young child, the quality (i.e., degree of nurturance and cognitive stimulation) of that involvement, and the mother's work status, all three of which were discussed above as relevant to the development of the young child or to paternal unemployment. No hypotheses were generated about unemployment effects per se in view of the paucity of current empirical data on the topic and the possibility of either a spillover or compensatory relationship existing between work and family roles which would yield contradictory child outcomes. Similarly, there are potentially both costs and benefits to the family when the mother with a jobless husband finds employment. It was posited, however, that if the quantity and quality

of the jobless father's involvement with his preschooler were greater than those of his employed peers, his children would be more competent than the preschool offspring of working fathers.

## Method

To obtain our sample, we turned to a small school system in a working class community, Willow Run Community Schools, and to Head Start Programs in similar communities near Detroit. This paper will report only on data collected in Willow Run where the unemployment was 11%-12% in 1983-1985 according to local newspaper reports (e.g., reports in the Ann Arbor News on November 9, 1983 and in the Detroit Free Press on August 6, 1986). The official unemployment rate in the area was approximately 12% in 1980 (Michigan Metropolitan Information Center, 1983).

The procedure followed in the Willow Run Community Schools was to ask the kindergarten teachers to distribute a flyer signed by the building principal to all two-parent families requesting their participation in a study of the effects of parental work status on young children so that the school could serve its students more effectively. The handout asked the parents to reply to a few questions about their employment status if they wished to participate or learn more about the study. Approximately 200 forms were distributed but only 14 were returned, only one of which had an unemployed father. The responders were invited to participate in the study but it was obvious that an entirely different strategy would be necessary. Financial constraints precluded our offering the families a substantial honorarium to take part in the study.

The new approach adopted was to obtain a list of the kindergarten children with two parents and an unemployed father from school records. A

letter was then mailed to each of these families on school letterhead signed by the building principal describing the study and requesting their participation which involved primarily an interview with each parent. Phone calls were then made to all of the families and personal visits made to homes with no phones. If the parents agreed to participate, appointments were made for the interviews and parents were told that in some cases their children would be administered a few tasks in school or at home on a different occasion.

In the Head Start Program in the Willow Run Community Schools the second procedure was followed from the beginning. For these families, however, letters were mailed to all intact families except those with severely handicapped children, signed by the head of each Head Start Program. A preschool program with a very low tuition fee in the Willow Run Community Schools was included in the study as the principal felt the fee could be afforded by most families. The same procedure was followed with this program as with the Head Start classes. All children who participated in the assessment were given small personal gifts.

The parent interviews which were conducted separately with each parent in his/her own home took approximately one hour. Incorporated in the parent questionnaire were items pertaining to each parent's perception of the quantity of the father's involvement in the rearing of the preschool/kindergarten-aged child and the quality of his interactions with that youngster, that is, the frequency of his nurturing behaviors and the cognitive stimulation he provided in the home. To obtain the above information, instruments used in prior investigations and found to be reliable and valid were employed. Specifically, the Paternal Index of Father Involvement (PICCI) (Radin, 1981; 1982) was employed to assess the amount of his involvement, a shortened version of the Cognitive Home Environment Scale

(CHES) (Radin & Sonquist, 1968) was used to determine the stimulation in the home, and some questions employed previously to measure paternal nurturance (Radin, 1972; 1982) were used in this questionnaire. There was also a ten minute observation of father-child interaction when the father was asked to help the child put a puzzle together and then solicit the child's help in returning the pieces to the box in which they came. A count was then made of the father's nurturing behaviors, his restrictive behaviors, and the percentage of nurturing behaviors to total number of nurturant and restrictive behaviors. The methodology employed in scoring the observation was adapted from scoring procedures used in a number of earlier investigations focused on assessing nurturant and restrictive parental behaviors. Details of the observation component of the study were reported elsewhere (Goldsmith, 1986). Demographic data about each parent were also collected. The interviews were conducted by graduate social work students and undergraduate psychology majors at the University of Michigan and by professional social workers.

On a separate occasion, before or following the parent interviews, approximately one-half of the children were administered a number of tasks individually in school or at home to assess their verbal competence, their perceptions of their own competence in several areas, and their perceptions of maternal and paternal nurturance and restrictiveness. The latter was included as an additional assessment of the quality of the father's participation in childcare. The instruments administered for these purposes were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn, 1965), Harter and Pike's (1980; 1984) scale of perceived competence and social acceptance, and Kagan and Lemkin's (1960) scale of children's perceptions of parental traits. In addition, a questionnaire was developed to learn something of the children's understanding of unemployment. All of the above child measures employed were standardized

instruments used in many prior studies except the last which was developed on the project. Two doctoral students administered them in the two years the study was conducted. School records were used to assess the children's attendance at school. Because the number of days of school varied from preschool to kindergarten and from one preschool to another, the percentage of days the child was absent of the total number of available school days was calculated and used as the attendance variable. The percentiles attained in reading and mathematics on the California Achievement Test (CAT) administered at the end of the kindergarten year were also included in the data set when they were available.

This paper will focus on the results obtained on the child measures, particularly the significant differences which emerged when the children of the employed fathers and unemployed fathers were compared. The parental responses to the questionnaire will be discussed when potential mediators of the unemployment effects on child competence are examined: quantity and quality of father involvement in childrearing and maternal employment status. Only the children attending the Willow Run kindergarten in year one of the project (1983-4) and those attending either of the Willow Run Schools' preschool programs in year two (1984-5) were assessed. Limited project funds prevented an assessment of all of the children. In placing the child in the employed or unemployed group, school data about the father's and mother's employment statuses were used in some cases and personal reports from one or both parents were used in the others. The reason for this procedure will be discussed below.

The statistical procedures employed in analyzing the children's data and the relevant parent data included Pearson's coefficient of correlation, factor analysis, stepwise and hierarchical multiple regression analysis, one-way and

two-way analysis of variance, and a z test of the significance of the difference of two correlations.

The Sample

Overall, the response rate was low. When considering families individually invited to participate who allowed us to administer tasks to their children, the response rate was 42%; however for only 29% of the invited families was the child assessed and both parents interviewed. In some cases, one parent agreed to participate but not the other. In other cases, the family moved before an appointment to do the interview could be arranged or the couple separated. In a few instances, the family initially agreed to participate then one or both parents changed their minds. For example, among the 14 families responding to our initial flyer, in only 67% were both mother and father interviewed. Some indication that it was not our approach that created the problem came from the dissertation on unemployment effects conducted at the same time in nearby communities. The response rate in that investigation where parents were also contacted through the school was 9% (Friedmann, 1984). Another recent dissertation at the University of Michigan attempted to determine the effects of divorce on adolescent girls and obtained the sample through several school systems; the overall response rate here was 24% (Perl, 1985). The investigation of the consequences for children aged 1 1/2 to 13 of paternal unemployment, referred to earlier, also obtained a response rate of 29% (Margolis & Farren, 1986, November); this investigation was conducted in northeastern U.S. It is clear that nonclinic families who have experienced recent misfortunes, or fear they may, are not particularly interested in participating in research investigations on the issue.

During both years of the study, when 59 families participated, twenty-eight children were administered the various scales: 17 in year one

(eight with employed fathers and nine with unemployed fathers) and 11 in year two (eight with working fathers and three with jobless fathers). In the group of 28, 1/2 were boys and 1/2 were girls, 75% were white and 25% were black, and the average age of the children was 67 months or five and one-half years. (Several of the children had spent a year in a young kindergarten class before entering the regular kindergarten and others spent two years in Head Start.) Sixty-four percent (or 18) came from families where both parents had been interviewed, 14% (or 4) from families where one parent had been interviewed and 21% (or 6) from families where neither parent had been interviewed.

Sixteen children or 57% of the total group of 28 came from homes with employed fathers and 12 or 43% had jobless fathers. Twenty-five percent of the children in each group (those with working fathers and those with unemployed fathers) were Black. In the group of children of working fathers, 62% were male and 38% female; in the group of children of jobless men, 33% were male and 67% were female. A one-way analysis of variance indicated that the difference was not significant. There was no significant difference in the chronological age of the children in the two groups. The mean was 65.4 months for the children of employed fathers and 69.4 months for the children of the unemployed fathers.

For the group as a whole, the mean father age was 34 and the mean education was 4.4 on the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (Hollingshead, 1970) which represents high school graduation. There were no significant differences in fathers' mean age or education when working and nonworking men were compared in an analysis of variance. The occupation of the unemployed men could not be computed on the same Index as they were jobless but the mean occupational rating of the employed fathers was 4.2 which represents skilled manual workers and craftsmen. The average length of time

the jobless fathers had been unemployed was 18 months. Thirty-one percent of the mothers in families with employed fathers were working and 42% of the mothers in families with unemployed fathers. The difference was not significant in a one-way analysis of variance. For the 16 children with working fathers, 15 fathers were interviewed and 15 mothers. For the 12 children of jobless men, six fathers were interviewed and seven mothers. There were no sex of child differences on any of the child measures except the Harter & Pike (1980) scale on perceptions of cognitive competence where the boys obtained significantly higher scores ($F(1,26)=14.9$, $p<.001$).

## Results

A comparison of children with working and jobless fathers on all the dependent variables using one-way anovas yielded one significant difference. The children of out-of-work men had significantly lower perceptions of their own cognitive competence ($F(1,27)=5.78$, $p<.05$) as assessed by the Harter & Pike scale. When the data were analyzed by sex of child, there were no significant differences for girls, but for boys the scores of sons of jobless men were significantly lower on perceived cognitive competence ($F(1,13)=4.82$, $p<.05$). In addition, the sons of jobless fathers obtained a higher score on one item on the project-designed questionnaire, that assessing the child's understanding of the word "unemployment" ($F(1,13)=5.71$, $p<.05$). There were no significant differences on the PPVT Mental Age (MA) or Percentile (%ile) Score, on the Kagan and Lemkin's scores of perceived punitiveness and nurturance of fathers and mothers, on the four other categories of the Harter & Pike scale (perceived physical competence, perceived acceptance by peers, perceived acceptance by mothers, and perceived acceptance by fathers), on attendance data, or on CAT percentile scores.

In the correlational analysis when father's employment status (working and non-working) was correlated with the child measures, only one significant correlation emerged; the scores on perceived cognitive competence were significantly correlated with father employment, that is, children of unemployed men had lower scores ($r(27) = -.43$, $p<.05$). The analysis was repeated by sex of child and no significant correlations emerged for girls but three were found when boys were considered. Their scores for perceived cognitive competence were significantly lower when fathers were unemployed ($r(13)= -.54$, $p<.05$), were significantly higher in an understanding of the word "unemployment" when fathers were jobless ($r(13) = .57$, $p<.05$), and the boys with out of work fathers had a higher percentage of days absent from school $r(7) = .77$, $p<.05$). There were no significant correlations between the length of time the fathers were unemployed and the scores on the child measures.

To examine maternal employment status as a mediator of paternal unemployment effects, stepwise multiple regressions were computed with the major child measures as the dependent variables and father and mother work statuses as the independent variables. The child variables used in the equations were the two PPVT scores, the five Harter & Pike scores, the four Kagan and Lemkin scores and the item on the unemployment questionnaire referred to above. Because no Black mothers were working, the regression analyses were computed on white families only. Only when the PPVT MA and perceived cognitive competence scores were the dependent variables were there significant predictors in the equations. For the equation with PPVT MA score as the dependent variable, there was one significant predictor, mother's work status, with higher scores obtained by working mothers' children ($R=.46$; $F(1,18)=4.84$; $p<.05$). A two-way analysis of variance yielded similar results

when computed for white families with the PPVT MA as dependent variable and mother and father work statuses as the independent variables. Only mother's employment status showed a significant main effect ($F(1,18)=8.76$; $p<.01$) and the interaction effect was not significant. Thus it appears that maternal employment, regardless of father's work status, was positively associated with cognitive development of the child. However, when a stepwise multiple regression was computed for the white subsample with both mother's education and mother's work status as independent variables and PPVT MA as the dependent variable, only mother's education emerged as a significant predictor; higher child scores were associated with higher maternal education ($R=.66$; $F(1,15)=11.35$; $p<.01$). Thus it is questionable whether mother's job status, per se, was influencing the child's verbal ability.

As to the perceived cognitive competence score, it was predicted only by father's employment status ($F(1,19)=5.93$; $p<.05$). When mother's employment status was entered first in a hierarchical regression analysis, it was still not a significant predictor of the children's perceptions of their cognitive competence, whereas father's employment status entered second, was still significant. Thus mother's working status did not mediate the impact of father's unemployment on this child measure. A two-way anova computed on white families with mother and father employment statuses as the independent variables and perceived cognitive competence as the dependent variable yielded similar results. Only paternal job status had a significant effect ($F(1,17)=6.32$; $p<.05$) and the interaction effect was not significant.

Two-way anovas computed on white families for the remaining child measures with parents' job statuses as independent variables yielded no significant findings except for the question on the meaning of unemployment. Here both parents' job statuses demonstrated significant effects and the

interaction was also significant ($F(1,17)=4.54$; $p<.05$ for all three significant findings). The highest score was obtained by children whose mothers were working and fathers were not. The Ns in all of the above computations were too small to compute two-way anovas or multiple regressions by sex of child or to enter sex of child as a third independent variable.

To examine other potential mediators of paternal unemployment, the following parent variables were examined: 1) scores obtained by each parent on his/her views of the quantity of father involvement in childrearing (PICCI), 2) paternal responses to questions on the cognitive stimulation provided in the home (CHES), 3) both parents' report on the frequency of nurturing behaviors by the father and 4) observational data of father-child interaction assessing nurturant and restrictive paternal behavior.

The PICCI has five components: statement of overall estimate of father involvement; amount of father involvement in the physical care of the child, amount of father involvement in the socialization of the child, the father's power in decision making about the child, and the availability of the father to the child. Scores on the five components are added to obtain a total score for the mother's view of father participation in childrearing and a total score for the father's view. Only total scores will be used in this report to reduce the likelihood of chance influencing the results. The Cronbach alpha value for the total father score was .62; for the total mother score, Cronbach's alpha was .72 when data on all 59 families participating in the study were included in the computation. The correlation between mothers' and fathers' total PICCI scores was highly significant ($r(18) = .61$; $p<.01$).

Because a shortened version of the CHES with only 17 items rather than 25 was used in this investigation, a principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation was performed on the mother and father data separately. For

fathers, two major factors emerged: educational books in the home with two items, and cognitively stimulating paternal activities and resources in the home with five items. The Cronbach alpha values for the two factors were .64 and .71 respectively when data for all 59 families in the study were included. As to the nurturance scale, there were four items each of which was included in the data analysis: frequency of showing love physically or verbally to the child, trying to help the child with his/her problems, able to make the child feel better when upset, and giving the child a lot of care and attention.

The one-way analysis of variance revealed that the scores for unemployed fathers were higher than those for employed fathers on both father total PICCI score ($F(1,19)=4.71$; $p<.05$) and mother total PICCI score ($F(1,21)=5.27$; $p<.05$). To obtain more readily understood figures for the amount of father involvement, two scores were used in one-way anovas, the percentage of time per day that the father was the primary caregiver (a subpart of the component of overall statement of father involvement), and the number of hours per week that the father was the primary caregiver (a question not included in the PICCI scale). The father responses to both questions were significantly higher for unemployed fathers than for employed fathers, ($F(1,20)=12.04$, $p<.01$ for percentage of time per day and $F(1,19)=8.03$, $p<.05$ for hours per week). The average percentage of time spent as a primary caregiver per week for the employed fathers was 23% and for unemployed fathers it was 49%. For hours per week as primary caregiver, the figure was 16 for the employed fathers and 41 for the jobless men.

To explore in greater depth the amount of father involvement as a possible mediator of unemployment effects, the correlations between the child measures and the total scores for father involvement obtained by the father

and by the mothers were compared in families where the father was working and where he was unemployed. One significant difference emerged. When fathers were working the correlation between their involvement score and the children's perceptions of their physical competence was not significant ($r(14)=-.31;p<.26$), but in families with an unemployed father, the correlation was positive ($r(4)=.91;p<.05$) and significant. The $z$ score for the difference between the correlations was -2.42, significant at the .05 level (d.f.= 18).

As to the quality of father involvement with the child, neither of the factors on the CHES showed significant differences between families with employed and unemployed fathers, nor was there a significant difference in any of the nurturance items in the mother's replies. For fathers, there was a significant difference in one item; unemployed fathers obtained lower scores on trying to help the child with his/her problems ($F(1,19)=8.88$, $p<.01$). The four observation scores employed in the analyses were number of paternal nurturing behaviors, number of restrictive behaviors, total number of paternal behaviors (i.e., nurturant plus restrictive behaviors), and proportion of nurturant paternal behaviors of the total number of behaviors. None of these scores were significantly different in families with a working or an unemployed father.

To determine if the CHES factors were associated with the child's cognitive development regardless of father work status, as had been found in prior studies, the two factors were correlated with the two PPVT scores. For the total group, the factor of stimulating activities and resources was significantly associated with the PPVT MA ($r(19) = .47$, $p<.05$). When the correlational analysis was repeated for each sex of child separately, the correlations were not significant for girls. For boys, however, the

correlation between stimulating paternal activities and resources and PPVT MA was significant ($r(8) = .69$, $p < .05$). The five specific items in that CHES factor are: 1) number of educational items in the home for the child, e.g., crayons, scissors, paper; 2) frequency with which the father reads to the child; 3) type of TV program father recommends that the child watch; 4) number and utilization of newspapers and magazines in the home; and 5) amount of schooling father expects child to receive. To determine if all of the questions were independently associated with cognitive development of the child, each of them was correlated with the PPVT scores. Two of the questions were significantly associated with PPVT MA: the query about the number of educational materials in the home for the child to use ($r(19) = .54$, $p < .05$) and the availability and usage of newspapers and magazines in the home ($r(19) = .62$, $p < .01$). The CHES factor score and each of its components were then correlated with father's education to determine if they were mere reflections of advancement in school; none of the correlations were found to be significant.

## Discussion

All of the findings to be discussed must be considered as highly tentative in view of the small N and the low response rate. Despite the study's limitations, it was felt that the results should be reported as they were meaningfully linked to the literature and were provocative. The data obtained also warrant consideration when hypotheses are generated in future investigations of the impact of unemployment on young children.

Most notable about the results was the absence of major differences between the young children of employed and unemployed fathers. The verbal intelligence of children with fathers out of work was no lower, nor were their

California Achievement Test scores. The children's perceptions of fathers were no more punitive, their perceptions of their physical competence was no worse and they did not feel they were less accepted by their mothers, fathers, or peers. The latter finding is concordant with the results obtained by Friedmann (1984) concerning an absence of differences in peer relations. The overall picture obtained of the young child with a jobless father is similar to that seen by Elder and his colleagues (Elder, 1979) who did not detect any impact of financial deprivation during the Great Depression on preschool-aged children until they entered high school. Although we did not ask the parents questions about their specific income we did inquire about the sources of funds coming into the home and learned that significantly more of the jobless fathers than employed fathers said the family received food stamps, 40% vs. 0% ($F(1,18)=9.00$, $p<.01$), felt it was hard to get along on their income ($F(1,19)=4.59$, $p<.05$); and indicated things were worse this year than last year ($F(1,18)=5.50$; $p<.05$). Thus the unemployed families in this investigation can also be described as financially deprived and comparable in that respect to Elder's subjects. The findings of this study are also in keeping with the initial data emerging in a New England study of the consequences for children in a wide age range of paternal unemployment; there, too, few differences were detected between children whose fathers were working and those whose fathers were not working (Margolis & Ferran, 1985).

Despite the absence of major differences, there were some areas in which the children, particularly the sons, of jobless men showed deficiencies compared to their peers with working fathers. They held lower perceptions of their own cognitive abilities and were absent from school more often. These two items are likely to be related and the more probable direction is for more frequent absences from school to have brought about lower self-perceptions in

the boys. The data did not provide any explanation as to why those boys were absent from school more frequently but one could speculate that the unemployed men who had a greater responsibility for childcare than their working peers were less diligent than their wives in helping the children get ready for school. The daughters of unemployed men have have been sufficiently interested in the largely female-oriented early school programs to need little additional encouragement to attend each day. The child's health was not responsible for the difference because 100% of the unemployed fathers described their children's health as good or excellent. Margolis & Ferran (1985) similarly found no effects of paternal unemployment on the children's health.

The children of unemployed fathers surpassed their peers with working fathers in one area; they had a better understanding of unemployment. This finding suggests that the homes with jobless men have the potential to stimulate the cognitive growth of the young children present. More will be said abut this possibility at a later point.

The data clearly indicated that the unemployed fathers were more involved in childrearing than their working peers. For example, the jobless men spent an average of 41 hours per week as the primary caregiver of the child versus 16 hours for working fathers, and were primary caregivers for an average of 49% of the week versus 23% for their employed peers. The latter figures are comparable to the mean figures obtained in a prior study using the same instrument for fathers described as having an intermediate level of involvement with their children (40%) and for traditional fathers (22%); the primary caregiving fathers in that investigation had a mean figure of 57% (Radin, 1982). The obvious question is why greater father involvement in childcare by jobless men did not produce the positive effects on the young

children that was reported for the middle class men who had a major role in raising their preschool-aged children (Radin, 1981; 1982; Radin & Sagi, 1982).

Two clues are provided by the data. For one, there was no significant difference on either of the factors pertaining to cognitive stimulation provided in the home between families with working and non-working fathers. In the prior study, the more involved fathers also spent more time with the child in activities which are mentally stimulating, e.g., reading to the child (Radin, 1982; Radin & Sagi, 1981). For a second, unemployed fathers who were more involved with their children had youngsters who had better perceptions of their physical competence. These two findings suggest that the jobless men are more involved in physical activities with their children than their employed peers but not more involved in verbal or intellectually stimulating activities. This is not surprising given the fact that this is a working class sample which tends to have less flexible views of husband and wife roles (Veroff, Douvan, & Kulka, 1981) and of mother and father roles (Riley, 1985).

There is no certainty that paternal activities such as encouraging the child to write, recommending certain TV programs to the child, or reading to the child will enhance the son or daughter's cognitive development, but such activities by fathers did correlate significantly with the children's scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test in this sample suggesting that there was a link in these families between cognitive stimulation by the fathers and the mental functioning of the children. The data also suggested that these stimulating activities included two different socialization processes recently highlighted in the literature (Barnes, Farrell, & Cairns, 1986): both passive role modeling, for example, reading a newspaper; and acting as a socialization agent, for example, reading a book to the child.

Another noteworthy finding of this study was the absence of evidence for either a compensatory or a spillover effect. The jobless fathers did not appear to be more or less irritable or punitive with their children than their employed peers. Support for this statement came from several sources. The children of jobless men did not perceive their fathers to be more or less punitive on the Kagan and Lemkin (1960) scale nor did they feel their fathers were more or less accepting on the Harter & Pike (1984) instrument than did the children of working fathers. The mothers' responses to questions about the nurturing behaviors of their husbands with their children did not differ by father work status, and on only one of four questions did the father responses about their own nurturing behavior reveal any differences. The structured observation of father-child interaction similarly displayed no difference in the number of nurturant or in the number of restrictive behaviors. Underlining the lack of evidence of a spillover effect were the replies made by the jobless men to an open-ended question about advantages of the current childcare arrangement. Almost all of the unemployed fathers referred to becoming closer to the child, having a better chance to watch their children grow, or something similar.

Putting all of the above data together, it can be inferred that unemployed men are missing the opportunity which they possess to enhance the cognitive growth of their children, particularly their sons. The findings that the men were no less nurturant than their working peers, and did enhance the children's self-perceptions in the physical area and in an understanding of unemployment suggest that jobless fathers could probably promote their children's mental competence if they engaged in more mentally stimulating activities with the child and more frequently provided a model of an adult interested in school-relevant activities.

It is likely that the jobless fathers in the study were unaware of their potential impact and how they could help their children. Educational institutions and social agencies have the potential to provide these men with such information and to provide instruction concerning what they can do to promote their children's cognitive competence. There are indications in the literature that men do not obtain such training elsewhere. They do not discuss issues related to fathering with their relatives (Riley & Cochran, 1985) and do not discuss the topic with other men with whom they work or once worked (Millard, 1983).

It is not necessary to start from scratch in developing father-oriented programs. Information has become available recently about how schools can reach out to fathers and encourage their involvement with their handicapped children (Palm, 1985). With a few modifications, such strategies can be used with jobless fathers of young children. Some other resources that can be used are masculine-oriented activities in recent books describing how parents can help their child to learn, for example, Creative Games for Learning (Karnes, 1977) and sections of books with tips on good fathering practices, for example, the chapters on learning with kids in The Father's Almanac (Sullivan, 1980). Recent books emphasizing father-child relations such as Gone Fishing (Long, 1984) can also be incorporated into father-oriented school projects. Such programs would also benefit two other groups of fathers: those who are sharing custody of their children with their former wives and those in intact families whose wives are working non-day shifts. Recent research indicates the latter men often take over a large measure of the childcare responsibility (Presser, 1986).

There was no clear evidence in this study that father nurturance or mother income functioned as mediating variables as the model of Moen and her

colleagues (Moen et al., 1983) proposed. However, the results did suggest two new paths for Moen's paradigm of mediators between a societal change and child development: the amount of father participation in childrearing and his provision of a stimulating home environment for children. The hypothesis posed that if the quality and quantity of paternal involvement in childrearing were greater in families with jobless fathers than in those with employed fathers, their children's competence would similarly differ, could not be tested as there was virtually no difference in quality of involvement in the two groups of men.

In conclusion, the results of the investigation, as limited as it was, provide reasons for both optimism and pessimism. One can be gratified to learn that paternal unemployment in 1983-5 did not have a major detrimental impact on the social or cognitive competence of preschool and kindergarten children. However, it is disappointing to learn that the men are not taking advantage of the great deal of time they are spending with their children to foster their mental as well as physical growth. The issue is one that educational institutions and family service agencies should take on as a challenge. Unemployment may have diminished in the past few years but there is every reason to believe that problems stemming from joblessness will be with us for a long time to come (Briar, 1980).

## Footnotes

1. This project was supported by a grant from the Division of Research Development and Administration and the School of Social Work at The University of Michigan. A shorter version of this paper was presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, April 1987 in Baltimore. The authors would like to acknowledge the extensive cooperation of the Willow Run Community Schools and the Out-Wayne County Head Start Program without whose assistance the research could not have been conducted. We would also like to express our deep appreciation to the families who participated with little in the way of compensation. The authors would also like to thank the graduate students at the University of Michigan, who worked diligently in various aspects of this study. These included: Rena Goldsmith, Leslie Sackett, Debra Ascher, Rosetta Bridges, Ed Borowski, Daphna Oyserman, Susan Kaftan, Cathy Buck, Ellen Wolock, and LuAnn Adams. Appreciation is also due undergraduate students Robin Cohen, Emily Frenette, and Shirley Kain, and social workers Flora Burke and Phyllis Ponvert who assisted in the data collection.

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